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## Continuing education; lifelong learning

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### Abstract

The term of lifelong learning stands for a consistency in learning over one's life in and beyond formal educational settings that means there are many common ways in which learning takes place. Like children and adolescences that have developmental needs as learning needs, adults do too. Today, there is an increasingly important need to continue education and acquire necessary skills to adapt to the ever-changing world. It is the purpose of this paper to enable one to realize the concept of the term, and understand deeply the importance of gaining knowledge and being updated through presenting its potential benefits. The paper describes the three types of: formal, non-formal and informal learning. Continuing education leads to skills, academic and personal developments, which are discussed in the article.

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### 1. Introduction

Before 1980, learning had not been viewed as a lifelong process (Collins, 2009). At this time, Malcolm Shepherd Knowles, the father of adult learning, stated that lifelong learning (LLL) would become the organizing principle of all education, and the term of LLL is now commonly used in educational conversation (Duyff, 1999).

Continuing Education (CE), professional development and LLL are synonyms that all refer to an educational or training process which is the main essential tool for an organization to succeed. Development of CE and the adult education were in the twentieth century. As the countries go to be industrialized, the demand for CE and achieving necessary skills has been aroused, challenging previous educational venues and creating opportunities for both professional and personal skill improvement. Many reasons exist to indicate the demand to LLL in 21st century, as: increasing access to information, warp and fast technology changes, an enhancing global interactions, industry shifts, and skill requirements (Gaymer, 2006).

In recent times, the term of lifelong education has been substituted by LLL in the literature and policy discussions. This occurred for the term of adult learning to replace adult education, as Courtney (1989) states. He says that the terms such as: adult education, CE, LLL, independent learning projects, community education, community development, adult learning, andragogy, adult basic education ..., have all been used to explain the same thing, at one time or another.

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A demand to developmental needs including learning needs is felt for adults as well as the children and adolescents. The important difference is that there are not as many facilitators in later life (Fleming, 1997).

LLL enables us to acquire skills for survival, something necessary to continue to live or exist. This may seem dramatic, but it is about to learn how to live (Lewis-Fitzgerald, 2005). This article seeks to present the concept of the term, enabling one to realize the demand to CE and LLL in this 21st century.

## 2. Material and method

This paper reviews the process of different forms of learning that takes place in one's life, gives the concept of CE. It begins with presenting a definition of the topic, describes various forms of learning, and presents the main potential benefits of continuing learning and education. It prepares a ground to realize the demand to CE or LLL, to adapt and live in this ever-changing world. Key issues were identified through review of literature on the CE and through review of literature on the LLL.

## 3. Results

Peoples continuously learn, gain knowledge and new skills in schools, at home, on the job or in the community. This is CE. The term is used mainly in the United States and Canada, which is called further education in the United Kingdom and Ireland, that is a broad term encompassing a wide spectrum of post-secondary learning activities and programs (Continuing education, n.d.). Learning takes place almost at all times in anywhere, as:

- Age 0-5 years: At early ages of life, a lot of learning takes place that prepares a foundation for further learning in future. Learning in these ages is mainly informal, occurs in children by copying almost everything from their parents, peers and contexts.
- Age 6-24 years: At these ages learning takes place in educational institutions, from primary and secondary to tertiary levels. Individuals learn from family life, social organizations, religious institutions, and mass media.
- Age 25-60 years: Adults learn informally mainly via the use of instructional media: from their jobs, work environments, colleagues, touring, mass media, information technologies, and nature. They learn from their experiences and ways of problem-solving. So, they demand to continuous development of intellect and steady improvement of skill.
- Age 60+ years: People in elder ages learn a great deal from activities suitable to their age. They can learn from art, music, sports for the elderly, handicrafts and social work. They can also participate in voluntary works in community organizations, clubs and associations (Rojvithee, 2005).

Therefore, learning includes various forms of: formal, informal and non-formal learning, as defined by Philippe Tissot (2004) in the following:

- Formal learning: is the learning that occurs in an organized and structured context (formal education, in-company training). This form is designed as learning and may lead to formal recognition (diploma, certificate) (p. 70);
- Non-formal learning: is the learning driven in planned activities. This form of learning is not explicitly designated as learning. But it encompasses an important part of learning such as vocational skills that are acquired at the work environments (p. 112);
- Informal learning: is defined as learning achieved from daily life activities related to family, work or leisure. It is often referred to as experiential learning and can, to a degree, be understood as accidental learning (p. 76).

Identifying and valuing all forms of learning is essential. CE benefits all individuals, communities and the country's economy, as:

- CE prepares for individuals, citizens and workers, the required knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and understanding in their life.
- CE leads to more productive and innovative communities, as workers make and find new capabilities and opinions. A constant change and update in workplace is seen in this new economic community. Therefore those who want to cope better with the demands of workplace changes, are those who constantly learn new skills and train for new challenges.
- CE strengthens the economy. Acquiring more skills, knowledge and ability by individuals leads to a higher capacity in the economy. A stronger economy means citizens have the opportunity to earn more, live better and contribute to the economic system (Canlearn, 2009).

#### 4. Discussion

The concept of LLL has been popularized over the past decade. Organizations rapidly changed to adapt to industry changes, to recognize the barriers of improvements, and to solve these problems. Individuals enhance the capacity to address organizational requirements, through LLL. Some important features of LLL are: duration, learner-centered perspective, multi-level and multi-subject learning, and open access. CE must be appropriate to the content and the purpose of learning. Internet and satellite technology draw individuals in educational coursework on the job or at home, that leads to a great savings of travel costs and time (Gaymer, 2006).

The study population is growing larger and becomes older. So, they have additional obligations such as work and family, for the most part. Therefore, a flexible learning framework is needed to enable one to learn at all times and all places (Laal, 2011). Because of the difference between individuals, there is a need to an adjustable pace and way of study suitable to the individuals' capabilities. The adult learning market is going to become more competitive as well as full of opportunities, for both the existing institutions and new entrants. Combination of increasing competition and the requirement to keep updated professionally with a rising standard of living and more leisure time have made studying an ongoing process of LLL (Beller, & Or, 1998).

Pierce, et al. (1993) noted that adult education is seeking for recognition as a profession and is suffering from an identity crisis. They cited Foster (1988) who lists four categories of antidotes for the recovery of adult literacy, as:

- what should be trained;
- who will be trained;
- modes and styles; and,
- assessment and evaluation.

CE is about what, how and when, one wants to learn. CE helps one to achieve his/her high school diploma, to study at a post-secondary education, to acquire new skills or get a better job. CE help individual to grow professionally with the latest technologies, knowledge and skills that lead to keep the job, achieve a new job or change careers through CE. CE can typically be broken down into three types:

##### Formal education

- Designed and planned education, training or professional enhancement that occur in a school, in the workplace or through a professional credit-granting organization.
- Learning takes place according to the determined rules of the school and the education should be arranged to end within time lines.

- Leads to a formal certification/diploma.

#### Non-formal education

- Education, training or professional development that are arranged by educational institutions and training organizations, in society.
- More adjustable to the student's needs.
- According to the program, it does not always lead to a formal certification.

#### Informal education

- Education and gaining knowledge and skills from daily experiences at home, in the society or at work.
- Education to improve individuals.
- May lead to a certification, but not always (CanLearn, 2011).

LLL includes all strategies and programs taking place during individual's life, to make opportunities to learn. It is a process of continuous education throughout someone's life, addressing the needs of both the individual and that of the relevant community (Abukari, 2005).

This idea will be facilitated by bringing together education and vocational education in central aspects of different policies such as youth, employment and research. In LLL practices, individuals choose among learning environments, jobs, regions and countries in order to improve their knowledge, skills and competencies and also to use them optimally (Harvey, 2012).

Organizations need to CE as a means to enhance the skills and knowledge of workforce. Individuals use CE for upward career movement, job enhancement and personal enrichment (Gaymer, 2006). Many benefits are ascribed to CE, as:

#### Skills development

- develop job opportunities
- change occupation or get an advancement
- upgrade or learn new skills and develop abilities
- get exposure to new ideas and best practices
- increase one's competition in the job market
- help to go on with technology and industry
- turn works to jobs with joy
- help to cope when economic downturns
- develop one's professional network

#### Academic development

- obtain high school diploma
- develop primary literacy
- provide necessities for continuing education and prepare someone for college or university
- regain studies to enhance the academic grade point average
- qualify for academic scholarships

#### Personal Development

- develop new interests
- become aware of various topics
- meet new people and expand your network
- deal with one's community
- realize problems affecting one and one's community
- enhance self-esteem (CanLearn, 2011).

## 5. Conclusion

The term of LLL means that education is varying, according to the individuals' needs and is accessible all over their lives. LLL is CE, including designs and strategies of organization, a key tool of speeding up to adapt to modern technologies. It is an ongoing education and learning, in formal, non-formal and informal forms, from cradle to grave, making knowledge to improve quality of life. LLL is providing or using all types of learning opportunities over individuals' lives to encourage the continuous development and enhancement of the knowledge and skills that are occupationally required and also for personal satisfying. Many benefits are ascribed to CE that includes individual, community and country economy. CE leads to skills, academic and personal developments. We live in a world where individuals should possess the abilities to understand, explain and process the information, so we should identify and value different kinds of learning and education.

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